

May 1, 1984

Dear Revolutionary Sisters (actually all N&L Committees),

The mail that just arrived is important enough for me to have taken back the Perspectives Draft Thesis I handed to the PTC last Thursday, in order to add the following paragraph to the last page, after we mention the three new publications that will greet us at the Convention:

Before 1985, our 30th year of existence, has ended, we propose to publish a collection of some of the extensive writings on Women's Liberation by Raya Dunayevskaya. It will be ready by International Women's Day and will contain the events as well as the analyses, beginning with our creation of the category of Women's Liberation as Reason as well as revolutionary force in 1955. The development of women's liberation as Movement and as philosophy of liberation will be dialectically tied together in an introduction that will indicate new perspectives.

The mail I'm referring to is the letter I just received from Humanities Press agreeing to publish just such a collection of my work on Women's Liberation which could include everything from the article on the miners' wives in the 1949-50 strike, and the "In Memoriam" to Natalia Trotsky, through such articles as were included in "Sexism, Politics and Revolution" in China, to the lectures given at the Urbana Third World Conference and the New School during the Marx centenary tour.

Despite my vehement opposition to the Kantian category, "ought," I'm forced to use it because there is no other way to express the need I feel for us to confront the reality that during the whole period since the publication of Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution, there has not been a single breakthrough review in the so-called feminist press. To me, that signifies that a more philosophic breakthrough on Women's Liberation must somehow be worked out, without waiting for the publication of this new collection of old writings with a new introductory summation. I would like to propose that you take advantage of the pre-convention period to write out a sort of balance sheet from which a new concretization -- I mean new projection -- of Marxist-Humanism for the WLM can flow.

Naturally, I'm looking forward to whatever summations you make in this period. Following Suzanne's report on WL to the REB

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on May 15, I may send you a more elaborate contribution to your pre-convention discussion. For a starter, however, I would suggest that you focus on Part IV of the Draft Perspectives Thesis -- "Objectivity/ Subjectivity: In Actuality and in Philosophy" -- especially the different ways I have projected two kinds of subjectivity over a 30 year period. Where I use the designation of Mao as an example of the "self-alienating type of mind" when it has "squared and balanced the self-opposition of universal and single will", use instead the petty-bourgeois type of mind that really does want to put him/herself at the service of "the masses" but is void of any conception of philosophy as action.

The reason I'm so anxious to expand on who reflects that type of individualism is because it does not come only from Communism. It has sprung up in very nearly all of the Third World revolutions. Frantz Fanon, after all, was the only one who that early was self-critical of the new and well as the old revolutionary leaders.

Let's see what comes "out of" individual self-criticism.

Yours,

Raya

Olga, Detroit

ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR WRITINGS ON WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Although we have long wanted to have a listing of Marxist-Humanist writings on Women's Liberation, what gives that kind of "summary" a new illumination, I believe, is the special emphasis we have experienced this year in seeing how all kinds of different summaries have been worked out -- whether that be the many paragraphs through which Raya has summarized key categories in the new book, or whether it be the look back at the summarizing amendments we have added to our Constitution with each new book.

Take the paragraph in which RD "summed up" Marx and the Black world. It began at the Expanded BEP on Jan. 1, when the new book was finally in everyone's hands, and our focus, at one and the same time, was on the tour, the new edition of American Civilization on Trial we wanted to issue, and all the concrete activities we would be engaged in from then to the Constitutional Convention being proposed there. It was during her summation of the discussion on "new moments", when Lou asked what that meant specifically in relation to the Black dimension, that RD looked back at the whole 40 years of Marx's Marxism and showed the concrete way he had worked it out in his praxis. On the tour itself, at the first lecture on Marx and the Black World, it became an actual new paragraph to be added to the last chapter of the book. And it is now the pivot of the new Introduction to ACOT.

There is not a single "fact" in that new paragraph that wasn't already "in" the book. But there is something new that has been said when one looks at the totality, something that even Marx didn't see that way. There is a new consciousness both of what Marx was doing over those 40 years, and of what Marxist-Humanism has seen in those 40 years with eyes of today. I believe that it is that jamming up of the totality Marx created against the philosophic categories Marxist-Humanism has created that gets you to those summations and makes them "summations that are new beginnings."

Moreover, it struck everyone especially forcefully when summed up that way because not many had looked at the new book as one specifically on Marx's relation to the Black dimension -- whereas the way in which Marx and Women's Liberation was summed up in Chapter 12 was, more or less, "taken for granted." Yet, when RD got down to working out her paper for a discussion with anthropologists (which she has called Marx's 'New Humanism' and the Dialectics of Women's Liberation in Primitive and Modern Societies), she found that -- while she had traced the Man/Woman concept in the manuscripts of the 1840s; the First International's Time, Law and Capital's Working Day in the 1850s; Dmitrieva and the Paris Commune in the 1870s; and Marx's commentaries on the Troquois and Irish women in the Ethnological Notebooks during the very last years of his life -- she would need to dig more into the 1850s, not to find if but to find specifically what would bring out his praxis on the all-important revolutionary force of women in that decade. Of all that was there, in that decade, she chose the two that demonstrate his relationship, first, with the working women during a strike in 1853-54; and then with a woman writer, whose aristocratic and reactionary husband and son had her committed to an insane asylum for daring to oppose them during an election campaign in 1856.

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The point of the story is not only to show that when you know what you are looking for, you can find it. It is to see the new conception that arises when Marx's deep relationship with all the forces of revolution -- a philosophy that made him keep his eyes glued on every opening and every event so that he not only allied with those forces but made them part of his very theory -- is looked back on after new philosophic categories have been created in our age by Marxist-Humanism.

It is for the same reason, I believe, that the so-called listing of all of our works on Women's Liberation, far from being a laundry list or even a matter of "digging them out" of the Archives, can become a real journey through the dialectic of our own 40 years. Looking at it today, with the eyes of 1983, both connects us to Marx and, at the point where a new category was created, becomes the totally new contribution to history and philosophy that Marxist-Humanism has created. What I want to present here is very far from either a summary paragraph, on the one hand, or any exhaustive journey through our Archives, on the other hand, but it will, hopefully, show how recollection is not "remembrance of things past" but becomes "new beginning."

THE NEW STAGE THAT BEGAN IN THE 1940s

Let's start with Raya's defense of Reva Crane in the Workers Party when, at the end of World War II, the men came home to re-assume the organizerships and other posts women had taken over when they had left. In the Archives you will find (p.467) RD's Dec. 18, 1945 critique of the WP and their "Need for a Political Perspective." You will not find a word there about the so-called Woman Question. But what that debate revolved about was the attempt of the WP to blame their failure to grow during the war, not on their concept of the backwardness of the American masses, but on the people who had to carry out their line -- who happened to have been women. The Johnson-Forest Tendency defended the women of the majority -- by insisting it was not those individuals who had to be attacked but the political line they had so faithfully carried out. But it was only in 1953, in the document called "Our Organization" (p.2042 in the Archives) -- after the break with both WP and SWP -- that RD placed that whole event within the analysis of the new objective stage we had by then recognized -- that is, the revolt of the women which had begun during the war, when women by the millions left their kitchens, and that had intensified after the war when they refused to quietly return. Moreover, it was at another whole new stage that we included that excerpt in 1970 in Notes on Women's Liberation -- in the section we called "The Historic Past, Present, and Future ... and the Need for Philosophy." It did not mean that that section had fully worked out that philosophy, but that working it out involves the dialectic from past, through present to the future.

Look at that period between the end of the war and our break from the SWP. Two things just leap out of the Archives. One is a letter (p.1324) to a woman comrade of the JFT who had written an essay on Woman and Socialism. RD's letter turns out to be a critique which advises: "What you need to do is to give form to your content which has as logical and dialectical a development as the content itself. Marx is pretty substantial, and I like to follow his form of beginning with phenomenon... and from there lead to essence.... The

end then returns to the beginning, only the phenomena have now been enriched by the essence and hence the conclusions are not mere appearance but law of motion, etc. Thus, don't you think it would be better if you began with: 'The steadily increasing divorce rate ...' (You will have to read the letter for yourselves for the concreteness that follows.) The letter is dated May 14, 1949.

It is just a month before the miners strike in West Virginia during which, in the articles sent to the Militant, which included those specifically on the miners' wives (p.1477), she certainly followed her own advice. Listen to a brief excerpt:

"A trip to northern West Virginia, seat of some of the most militant mass picketing of the just-concluded mine strike, reveals that the miners' wives played an important role. The most that could be gleaned from the big dailies was that the wives were 'taking' the long fight and empty food baskets because they had no other choice. In truth, however, the role they played was not merely a passive but an active one. Here are but a few incidents of the most recent strike..." And here follows the different attitude of the women than the union and how they took matters into their own hands; whether via hatpins or going door-to-door in surrounding communities for help, or forming their own organization to decide what to do should their husbands decide to go back to work without a contract. (I believe we can include some of this exciting material right in our new 49-50 pamphlet.) No wonder the editor of the Militant grudgingly had to admit the articles were a breath of fresh air for that journal!

But now consider what it means that when (during the 1951 strike when I had moved to Pittsburgh) RD asked me to take the tape recorder to W. Va. to get those stories for ourselves, she felt compelled to warn me not to allow the pervasive male chauvinism in the mining regions to limit me only to talking with the women, important as that was, but to remember that I was a full politico with ideas to contribute on all questions... One grasps what a difference there is between that full consciousness of what political-philosophic work is and Rosa Luxemburg's refusal to be "pigeon-holed" -- which, no matter how valid, was not linked at one and the same time, as RD's was, to development of woman as a new Subject of revolution.

FROM THE CRITICAL YEAR, 1953; THROUGH THE 1960s; TO TODAY'S WLM

Let's turn to that critical year, 1953, of our own history, when RD made the historic breakthrough on the Absolute Idea and identified the dual movement therein; the movement from practice to theory as well as the movement from theory to practice --- but it did not become the ground for Correspondence Committees. Where Grace Lee, on Stalin's death, degraded the concept of Woman (and worker) to the insistence that the "new" could be shown in a cartoon of women in a factory exchanging hamburger recipes while they ignored the radio blaring the news of Stalin's death, RD turned to the workers in Charles Denby's plant, who were proposing their own foreman as Stalin's

replacement. That is one sign of the vast gulf between conceptions of where we were going. Another, specifically on the question of the dimension of women, was the simple fact that women workers like Jerry Fegg and Angela Terrano felt so alienated from that page as it appeared that they refused to have their columns in that section. But the revolutionary dimension of women kept being revealed everywhere -- from the chapter by Christine in Indignant Heart to the magnificent story of the women in People of Kenya Speak for Themselves.

When finally we were truly on our own, with the founding of News and Letters Committees, it was no accident that we had already singled out women as one of the four forces of revolution. Keeping ones eyes glued on the movement from practice almost "automatically" reveals the revolutionary dimension of women throughout all of history -- from the milkmaids described in Marxism and Freedom right through every event of your own day. Consider how powerfully it was recorded through the whole explosion of pamphlets that came out of the 1960s, so that Workers Battle Automation includes not only the exchange between Charles Denby and Angela Terrano, a young working woman, but the voice of the young woman who spoke as a "rebel with a cause"; and our two women Freedom Riders, one white and one Black, found something as magnificent as "Woman Power Unlimited" in Mississippi. We were "writing on women" everywhere -- whether that was the Two Worlds column in April 1960 on "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in South Africa" which described the 1952 revolt of the South African women to the passes; or whether it was the Weekly Political Letter on July 6, 1962 from the Gambia which described the "high level of discussion of that allegedly most backward African, a Mandinka woman, who was not only a natural orator but, illiteracy notwithstanding, the most intelligent 'citizen of the world', as one young woman phrased it"; or whether it was the interview with a Hong Kong refugee; or the women of the Maryland Freedom Union. And just consider the title of Raya's In Memoriam to Natalia Trotsky in 1962 that transformed it into the whole question of the "Role of Women in Revolution."

Yet it was not until Women's Liberation had moved from Idea to actual Movement that we could initiate a very different kind of Marxist-Humanist WL page in our paper in Nov. 1969, publish Notes on Women's Liberation, We Speak in Many Voices in Jan. 1970 -- and identify WL as the critical newest of the new passions and new forces in Philosophy and Revolution while amending our Constitution in 1973 to catch that new stage objectively and subjectively. That did not mean only that the movement from practice illuminated for us what we had been doing all through those years; or even that we first saw all the new questions it raised. It is true that we saw, with new eyes, that the struggles we had recognized as both race and class were, as well, a vital part of the true WLM. It is true that the interview with Jade took on even deeper meaning when it became part of a new pamphlet we called Sexism, Politics and Revolution in Mao's China. There was nothing we published during the 70s that was not deepened by the new category of woman as force and Reason, whether that was America's First Unfinished Rev'n or the First General Strike or Frantz Fanon and American Black Thought. But from the beginning we spelled out what WE had to contribute as labor, Black and philosophy, because without them there can be no total uprooting. What is key to grasp in the new pamphlet we published directly on women, and what distinguishes Working Women for Freedom from NOWL is that the Appendix established its whole form -- and was grounded in Philosophy and Revolution, Chapter 1, without which there could not have been a Chap.9.

The truth is that that UCAE series of lectures on Women as Thinkers AND AS REVOLUTIONARIES proved to be the very first expression of the new dialectic that had begun with Philosophy and Revolution and -- after seven long, hard years of further digging and following where it led -- brought us to the whole new stage of cognition represented by Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution.

PHILOSOPHY AS ACTION AND AS ANTICIPATION: OUR TRILOGY AND OUR HISTORY

When the dialectic of history has been unchained -- and it was unchained for our age by Marxist-Humanism -- all kinds of new insights into philosophy as action and philosophy as anticipation are possible. It was when a whole new category had been made of "Woman as Reason and as Revolutionary Force" -- as only one woman philosopher, Raya Dunayevskaya, had succeeded in doing -- that women finally became a vital part of the philosophy of freedom. That is what made it possible for us to "summarize" the whole decade of the WLM's search for a theory in one short page (6/80 N&L) as a critique of three representative alternatives to that philosophy. It is what made possible such new kinds of essays as Urszula's on women in Poland, and Meda's on women in the Middle East, and Eugen's on Marx's Concept of Woman, and Revolutionary Feminism.

The most direct, immediate expansions of the new book directly on Women's Liberation are, of course, the lecture Raya presented at the Third World Women's Conference in Urbana, which will be included in their publication of the papers given there; and the paper for the anthropology conference I referred to at the very beginning of this discussion article. But can anyone think that the new Introduction to ACOT is not "on women" when they read that full section on "Historic Turning Points: Slave Revolts, Women's Liberation, Anti-Imperialism"?

Or can any of us miss seeing that our 25 Years of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S. is both the first of our pamphlets to flow out of the new book, and one of the best summaries of our writings on Women's Liberation we could possibly compile? Just take a look at the footnotes alone! Look at ftns. 15 and 16 on p. 8; at ftn. 18 on p. 11; at ftn. 26 on p. 14 (which records what the Black women in the factories said of Second Sex in the mid 1940s!); at the whole of p. 15 with all four of those critical footnotes; at ftns. 37 to 39 on p. 18; 45 and 46, 48 and 50, and the whole final section from p. 23 to the end -- indeed, scarcely a page of the entire history is not actively on the revolutionary dimension of woman.

Most of all, can anyone read the trilogy with eyes of today and think we can "pick" the pages or sections that are "on woman" without projecting that it is that entire trilogy that addresses women's liberation? Just as grappling with study classes in the new book at the beginning of the year made us see that even a class that was to be strictly on Part II would soon enough reveal that, in fact, Part II projects all three parts -- and propel one back to Part I and forward to Part III -- will the new book not send us back to Philosophy and Revolution, and help us to understand that work in a very new way? That is what I believe the journeys through our own 40 years we have been making will help us do.

-- Olga

16331

September 29, 1983

Lydia Sargent and John Schall
South End Press
302 Columbus Ave.
Boston, Mass. 02116

Dear Lydia Sargent and John Schall:

During Raya Dunayevskaya's lecture tour this year -- which revolved about both the Marx Centenary and the publication of her new work, Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution -- she spoke to some 46 different audiences on a wide variety of topics. Everywhere she spoke she found intense interest in Marx's concept of woman and in her own Marxist-Humanist view of today's Women's Liberation Movement. She was repeatedly asked, especially by Women's Liberationists and Third World activists, whether a collection of her many writings on Women's Liberation was available.

Since her tour ended, I have been thinking about what such a collection might include. In addition to several new lectures developed specifically this year for the tour, as well as other essays Raya has written over the last decade, I believe there might be considerable interest in much of the earlier work Raya has done. (I am thinking, for example, of articles she had written on the participation of the women during the historic 1949-50 Miners' General Strike) of a critique she wrote in 1953 of the attitude of the "Old Radicals" to women in the post-World War II world; or of the "In Memoriam" she wrote on Natalia Trotsky in 1962, which she had entitled "Role of Women in Revolutionaryism.")

The concentration, however, would be the wealth of material on today's Women's Liberation Movement over the last 14 years -- which would cover the period from her talk to WMAP (at the time of the Marlene Dixon tenure struggle) on "The WMAP as Reason and as Revolutionary Force" at Chicago University in April, 1969, through to the new essays just written for the Marx Centenary. I am enclosing two of the most recent essays for you so you can see their scope. The one entitled "Marx's 'New Humanism' and the Dialectics of Woman's Liberation in Primitive and Modern Societies" was given to the Second International Conference on "Theology, Bureaucracy and Human Survival" at the New School for Social Research earlier this month; the other, entitled "The Trail from Marx's Philosophy of Revolution to Today's WLM Movement" was given in April to the Conference of Third World Women at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Would you be interested in discussing with Raya the publication of such a collection? Could you let me know within a month? If so, we can explore further the kinds of material that might actually be included and discuss the other questions involved in such a publication.

Best wishes.

Olga Demanekt, Literary Agent
for Raya Dunayevskaya

e/o

16332

February 20, 1984

Dr. Simon Silverman
Humanities Press
Atlantic Highlands,
New Jersey 07716

Dear Simon:

Raya was very happy to see the new ad Humanities has just taken out in The Women's Review of Books, which Tom Radko sent us. Please give him our thanks and good wishes. News & Letters has just sent in three new ads of our own in three quite different kinds of journals -- one in the New York Review of Books, another in The Nation, and one even in The Guardian for its special International Women's Day issue. They should certainly all buttress each other and keep Raya's newest book genuinely new. Your ad, in addition, got me thinking again about an idea we've been thinking about ever since Raya's Marx centenary tour last year.

As you know, Raya spoke on that tour to some 46 different audiences on a wide variety of topics -- and everywhere she spoke she found intense interest in Marx's concept of Woman and in her own Marxist-Humanist view of today's Women's Liberation Movement. She was repeatedly asked, especially by Women's Liberationists and Third World students, but by many other intellectuals as well, whether a collection of her many writings on Women's Liberation was available. Ever since she reported that, I've been thinking about what such a collection might include.

In addition to several new lectures she developed specifically this year for the tour (I'm enclosing copies of two of them: "Marx's 'New Humanism' and the Dialectics of Women's Liberation in Primitive and Modern Societies" is the paper she gave at the New School for Social Research in fall; "The Trail to Today's Women's Liberation Movements" is the one she gave at Urbana in spring), there are not only several others written over the last decade, but several written much earlier that I believe would have great interest for readers today. I am thinking of articles she wrote about the participation of the women during the historic 1949-50 Miners General Strike against Automation; of the "In Memoriam" to Natalia Trotsky in 1962 -- which she had entitled "Role of Women in Revolution"; of other essays she has written on "Sexism, Politics and Revolution" in China.

In fact, there is a great wealth of such material that I think would make up a collection which would have considerable interest and appeal to a wide audience. What do you think? Would Humanities be interested in publishing such a collection? I am sure I could convince Raya to write a special Introduction for it -- and it would be great to have something like that in time for International Women's Day 1985! Is that feasible?

Do let me know if you would want to see copies of the other material I've suggested. And do, please, give my good wishes to Judy as well as Tom.

Best wishes,
Olga

Olga Domanski
c/o

16333



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Directors
Simon Silverman
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April 26, 1984

Dear Raya and Olga:

I do appreciate your patience and cooperation during the past couple of months when things have been somewhat hectic in the office. I am sorry for the delay in responding to your suggestion to publish a book of your collected essays on Women's Liberation. With your following and with the effectiveness of News & Letters as a marketing medium of course we would be interested in adding this to our list of publications. There are several things I would like to discuss and clarify and then you can submit all the material you plan to include in the volume.

1. Olga, in her letter of March 2, suggests that you are prepared to place an initial order for at least 1,000 copies of this collection. I would like to know that this is a firm order based upon similar terms and conditions which obtained for ROSA LUXEMBURG. Let me assure you that you will receive royalties on all the copies you purchase at a 50% discount.

2. We would like to know where and in what year the essays were published and if they have appeared in print before.

3. We would like to publish the essays as they are with only a minimal rewriting job if at all.

Olga suggests that you would write a special introduction for it and we would like that to be delivered as soon as possible so we can begin our production work to have it ready in time for the International Women's Day in 1985. Exactly what day is this? I hope it is toward late summer or fall!

This should now set your mind at ease and set the ball rolling and we look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Incidentally, Judy tells me that she has not had a reply to her letter of April 2 of which I enclose a xerox copy. Can you help in both instances, a reader for the Adorno title and a genius who can help with Russian for the other title? This would be much appreciated.

On the eve of my departure for Israel I send both of you my warmest well wishes and again, thank you for your welcomed patience.

Shalom,

Simon
Simon Silverman
Jac

16334

May 7, 1984

Dear Judy:

In his April 26 letter to Raya about publication of a new book of Raya's collected essays on Women's Liberation, Simon asked several questions to "set the ball rolling" -- and I wanted to answer them as fully as I can at this moment, though much of what follows has to be an estimate only at this stage:

1) As to what year and where the various essays were published -- I have collected, for Raya to look over, 25 essays and essay-letters which cover ~~an~~ an entire 34 year period (from 1950 to 1984) so far. I would estimate they might come to about 150 printed pages. Some are mimeographed but have never been published before except in that form to be circulated to a limited audience. Others have appeared in various mimeographed "pamphlets" put out by N&L. Some have appeared as columns in News & Letters. A few have been printed in other presses (one for example appeared in the Detroit Women's Press; another in Praxis International just this year).

2) The range and scope is very broad. You can get an idea from the kind of categories Raya is thinking of grouping them into: Labor and the Black Dimension; Women as Thinkers and Revolutionaries; the International Dimension; Letters on the Process of Developing New Categories and Writing New Books; Practice and Theory. (These are a very general idea of the kinds of categories Raya thought might be useful, not a final decision, of course.)

3) The only entirely new essay would be the special Introduction Raya would write for the collection. The others would appear as written over the 34 years -- with the exception that a few, which are transcripts of lectures she has given and which she never checked herself, are somewhat rough and would need some editing, I'm sure. (I would most likely be the one to do that editing, Judy, and would like to know what kind of time I would have to prepare all the copy to send on to Humanities. I ask because N&L is moving its offices to Chicago this summer and it will mean a few very hectic weeks for me, so the time schedule is important for me to know in planning the months from now through to September.)

4) Some of the essays would probably need very brief explanatory notes (no more than a paragraph at most; some only a line or two) to place them in time and context.

There are also a few questions I'd like to ask concerning preparation of the copy for you: 1) Would all the material have to be typed double-space in manuscript style; or would it be acceptable to send you xerox copies of those that have been printed in one form or another, provided, of course, that corrections would be marked very clearly as if they were "galley"? And 2) Do you know who would be doing the copy-editing for you?

I really do think it will be a magnificent collection and will appeal to a quite wide audience. Raya has already written to Simon that N&L wants to place its initial order for 1000 right now. It's good to be back "in business" with you, Judy. Let me know what else you might need to know.

Best wishes

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